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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5978
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6236
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3703
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 2145
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5046
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 4783
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 6996
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¶1. (U) Below is a compilation of political highlights from Embassy New Delhi for May 24-30, 2007 that did not feature in our other reporting, including:

-- Left Groups Disparage United Progressive Alliance Performance
-- Kerala Communist Party Punishes Leaders for Public Feud
-- BJP Hopes for a Toe-hold in South India in Jeopardy
-- Improved Voter Turnout for Second Round of Bhutan Mock Elections

Left Groups Disparage United Progressive Alliance Performance

¶2. (SBU) Just days after the May 22 release of the Prime Minister's (PM) "Report to the People," the Left unleashed a storm of criticism of United Progressive Alliance (UPA) performance. A group of 500 left-leaning non-governmental organizations and "grass roots organizations" released its own "People's Report Card," alleging that the UPA had failed and "was not just ignoring but violating the mandate of the people that brought it to power." Rejecting the PM's assertion that "the National Common Minimum Program (NCMP) has been substantially implemented," the Report Card claimed that the UPA has achieved less than half of its stated goals, and awarded it an overall grade of 30 percent for its performance in education, health, employment, combating discrimination, decentralizing the government and providing peace and security. The groups then demanded that the UPA honor its pledges to provide universal access to public education, allocate six percent of the Gross Domestic Product to education, implement the National Rural Health Mission, ensure a Right to Work for the rural poor by implementing the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, and enact the Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, and the Women's Reservation Bill.

¶3. (SBU) In an editorial in the Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPM) journal "Peoples' Democracy," politburo member Sitaram Yechury called on the UPA to "seriously introspect" on the areas in which it had not met its NCMP targets. Conceding that the UPA had undertaken some "positive measures," Yechury asserted that these "have been initiated,

under pressure from the Left parties...in vital areas, the promises made in the NCMP are yet to see the light of day." Yechury maintained that "despite promises that the profit-making public sector units would not be privatized or disinvested, there were efforts to negate this," and that "most serious is the continued neglect of the agricultural sector," through the UPA's unwillingness to provide the promised substantial hikes in public investment in agriculture, rural infrastructure and irrigation, provide easy access to credit for farmers, and ensure "fair and remunerative prices for farmers crops, protecting them from agricultural imports." In Yechury's view, the "most disconcerting" element of the UPA's performance was its "relentless pursuit of the neo-liberal agenda of economic reforms." Although the Left props up the UPA, its criticism of government performance was in many ways more virulent than that of the National Democratic Alliance/Bharatiya Janata Party opposition. This indicates that year four of the UPA government will likely be just as stormy, if not more so, than year three.

Kerala Communist Party Punishes Leaders for Public Feud

¶4. (U) The CPM suspended Kerala Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan and party State Secretary Pinarayi Vijayan from the politburo, the CPM's highest policy-making body. The party's General Secretary announced the punishment on May 26, explaining that the suspension was the consequence of a public airing of disagreements between the two leaders. Both the Chief Minister and the State Secretary will, however, continue in their respective posts in the state and the

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matter will be discussed further in the party's Central Committee, scheduled to meet from June 24-26. The running feud between the two Communist chieftains of Kerala, described in reftel, had worsened in recent days, resulting in the politburo's unprecedented action. Both leaders publicly accepted the punishments, but indications from Kerala are that the feuding will continue in the lead up to the 2008 party elections for state office holders. The Chief Minister's position in particular seems secure because of his popularity with voters, although some media contacts believe that he will have to go if the in-fighting worsens.

BJP Hopes for a Toe-hold in South India in Jeopardy

¶5. (SBU) The BJP, which has never had a Chief Minister in south India, is worried that its dream of heading a government in the region may be in jeopardy. Statements by leaders from the BJP's coalition partner, the Janata Dal (Secular) (JD(S)), cast doubt on whether it will honor the two parties' power-sharing agreement, under which each is due a twenty month period with its choice as Chief Minister. Under the terms of the agreement, the JD(S) Chief Minister H.D. Kumarasamy is due to step down in October 2007. The JD(S) Labor Minister, Iqbal Ansari, however, recently said that Kumarasamy would not step down, echoing previous statements made by former Prime Minister and JD(S) luminary H.D. Deve Gowda.

¶6. (SBU) JD(S) contacts told Post that Gowda fears that his party will lose the Muslim vote, upon which it depends in part, should it allow the BJP to take control in Karnataka. A media contact said that JD(S) leaders plan to exploit BJP legislators' fears that they will lose their seats should the JD(S) force an election, and plan on splitting the BJP by offering cabinet positions to BJP legislators who defect to the JD(S). Despite statements to the contrary, the BJP state Industries Minister said he expects the JD(S) to honor the bargain between the parties. Congress, for its part, is waiting in the wings with a Congress official telling Post that his party expects to win the next election handily and is content to watch the JD(S)/BJP coalition collapse.

Comment: If the rumblings are correct that JD(S) will abandon the power-sharing agreement, the BJP's hopes of establishing a toe-hold in south India will be dashed. End comment.

Improved Voter Turnout for Second Round of Bhutan Mock Elections

17. (SBU) The Government of Bhutan successfully staged the second of two mock elections on May 28 in preparation for actual elections scheduled to take place sometime in 2008. At the conclusion of the first round of mock voting April 21, Bhutan's Chief Election Commissioner Dasho Kunzang Wangdi expressed his disappointment to the press that only 50 percent of those eligible to register took part. The Bhutanese Embassy in New Delhi and the website for the Bhutanese Election Commissioner reported that the turnout for the May 28 round was better, with 36,000 more voters casting votes, an increase from 51 to 57 percent of registered voters participating. Reuters reported that two Indian voter observers were on hand, as well as the Resident Coordinator for the Liaison Office of Denmark, and the head of the UN Development Program in Bhutan.

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